



## Chavez: OPEC Could Set Oil at \$40-\$50

March 6, 2005

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said Saturday that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries could fix a price for oil in the range of \$40 to \$50 per barrel, adding that low petroleum prices were a thing of the past.

Chavez's comments came ahead of a crucial OPEC meeting in Iran on March 16. Some analysts are expecting the cartel to cut production to boost oil prices, which have skyrocketed over the past year on supply worries.

Venezuela, the world's fifth-largest oil exporter, has been consistently pushing for higher oil prices. Venezuela produces more than 3 million barrels of crude oil a day.

"The OPEC could fix the price at between \$40 to \$50 per barrel," Chavez told reporters in New Delhi.

"The world should forget about cheap oil. It will never go back to the \$10 per barrel rate that prevailed in those days," he added, without elaborating.

Crude oil futures traded above \$53 a barrel again on Friday.

Chavez, who is on a four-day state visit to India, held talks earlier Saturday with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, during which the two countries agreed to cooperate in the energy, biotechnology, space and railroad sectors.

Chavez later flew to Calcutta, where he said he was considering increasing oil trade with countries like India and China to ensure their fast economic growth.

"Venezuela will now help the Southern Hemisphere countries with its oil more than it has helped the United States," he said. "America wants to keep all the good things in the world for itself. But we will not let them do it."

Relations between the United States and Venezuela have deteriorated steadily since Chavez took office in February 1999. He has repeatedly accused Washington of trying to destabilize his government. The State Department has rejected the allegation.